

Floor Discussion

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The first paper, "Linking CASIC and Survey Description: Current Developments Concerning Comprehensive Survey Documentation," was presented by J. Merrill Shanks of the University of California-Berkeley. It discussed recent developments and future prospects concerning two distinct but related aspects of Computer-Assisted Survey Information Collection (CASIC): 1) the potential of the World Wide Web for publishing survey information; and 2) the automatic conversion of survey information that is already embedded in software used for data collection into comprehensive documentation for the resulting data.

The second paper, "EDI: Electronic Data Interchange for Statistical Data Collection and Dissemination," was presented by Wouter J. Keller of Statistics Netherlands. This paper presents experiences and projects at Statistics Netherlands with EDI for statistical data collection and dissemination.

The third paper, "Metadata: A Foundation for Disseminating Canadian Census Information," was presented by Rick Rideout of Statistics Canada. This paper presents the Canadian experience in developing its metadata system, providing examples of product-end interfaces which illustrate how metadata provides a conduit between the raw data collected by the Census and the answers to client questions.

The first question was posed to Wouter Keller by Mark Pierzchala. Mark's concern was that with different countries and different agencies performing so many distinct tasks, how can data be compared between nations? Can the technology being developed at Statistics Netherlands be spread so that data can be utilized between nations? Wouter acknowledged this was a problem. He stated that tools, such as metadata, needed to be supplied and implemented. He also stated that agencies need to exercise standard conceptual definitions regarding data that is conveyed between nations.

Micheal Colledge of the Australian Bureau of Statistics raised the next question for Wouter Keller. Micheal wanted to know if Wouter was familiar with the number of data collection services that existed within business organizations. Wouter responded by stating that he wasn't certain of an exact number but that there were several sources from which data could be obtained. Among those sources were financial data, employment data such as salaries, and import and export logistics. Micheal also asked to what extent is the metadata that is collected for the Census related to the metadata that exists in statistical data documentation system. It was stated that there is indeed a relationship between metadata collected by different agencies. Agencies often look into Census metadata, as well as metadata collected at Statistics Canada, when trying to cleanse metadata collected by their own agencies.